

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

AID-20 EB-11 TRSE-00 COME-00 IO-12 RSR-01 /125 W
----- 073301

R 010415 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8713

INFO KUALA LUMPUR 4648

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1776

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN, SN

SUBJECT: GOS ASSESSMENT OF ASEAN MEETING

1. DURING CALL ON BOGAARS, PERM SEC OF FOREIGN
MINISTRY, YESTERDAY, I ASKED HIM FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF
RECENT ASEAN MEETING. HE SAID GOS PRIMARY AIM HAD BEEN
TO ASSESS WORK OF ASEAN OVER PAST FIVE YEARS AND TO
ATTEMPT TO GIVE IT NEW DIRECTION. GOS ATTITUDE IS THAT
ORGANIZATION HAS GRADUALLY BECOME A POLITICAL FORUM
AND THAT IT SHOULD GIVE GREATER EMPHASIS TO ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL QUESTIONS. FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM HAD MADE
THIS SUGGESTION IN HIS OPENING STATEMENT IN WHICH HE SAID
" ASEAN IS ESSENTIALLY AN ORGANIZATION FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIC
COOPERATION".

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2. BOGAARS SAID THERE WAS LITTLE OR NO SUPPORT FOR THIS SUGGESTION BY OTHER MEMBER COUNTRIES. GENERAL FEELING WAS THAT, IN VIEW OF UNSETTLED CONDITIONS IN INDO- CHINA, QUESTION OF EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRC AND OTHER POLITICAL QUESTIONS AFFECTING REGION, ASEAN HAD TO GIVE FIRST PRIORITY TO POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS. SOME DELEGATES WERE A BIT CRITICAL OF SINGAPORE' S PROPOSAL AND ACCUSED GOS OF LOSING INTEREST IN ORGANIZATION. BOGAARS RECALLED ONE SIDE REMARK TO EFFECT THAT PM LEE SEEMS TO BE TRAVELLING INCREASINGLY OUTSIDE THE REGION WHILE HIS TRIPS TO NEIGHBORING ASEAN COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN INFREQUENT AND THAT THIS MAY INDICATE SINGAPORE' S LESSENING INTEREST IN ASEAN.

3. I POINTED OUT TO BOGAARS THE CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION GIVEN TO ECONOMIC QUESTIONS IN COMMUNIQUE AND PRESS STATEMENT FOLLOWING MEETING AND SUGGESTED PERHAPS SINGAPORE' S SUGGESTIONS OF GIVING GREATER PRIORITY TO THESE MATTERS HAD HAD SOME RESULT. HE SAID STATEMENT RE COORDINATION OF WORK ON REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF INDO- CHINA (PARA 7 OF COMMUNIQUE) WAS ESSENTIALLY WINDOW- DRESSING, WITH NO REAL SUBSTANCE. IN FACT, HE SAID, ASEAN MEMBERS SEEM TO HAVE PULLED BACK A BIT FROM THEIR EARLIER STANCE ON RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT IN VIEW OF UNSETTLED CONDITION IN INDO- CHINA. EACH COUNTRY WOULD PURSUE ITS OWN EFFORTS BUT NO COORDINATED ASEAN EFFORT IS ENVISIONED AT LEAST FOR NOW.

4. RE TAKING A COLLECTIVE APPROACH ON FORTHCOMING MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS (PARA 10) HE SAID INDONESIA (SUMITRO) HAD WANTED TO SET UP SECRETARIAT IN JAKARTA TO COORDINATE POLICY ON TRADE NEGOTIATIONS APPARENTLY AS BACKSTOP TO SCCAN AND TO OVERSEE WORK OF ASEAN BRUSSELS COMMITTEE AS WELL, BUT SINGAPORE AND OTHERS HAD SHOT THIS DOWN ON GROUNDS EACH COUNTRY HAD DIFFERENT TRADE PROBLEMS AND THAT THE CONCERTING OF OVERALL TRADE POLICIES NOT POSSIBLE. THUS, COMMITTEE WHICH HAS BEEN SET UP IN GENEVA WILL EXCHANGE VIEWS AND TRY TO ACHIEVE SOME DEGREE OF COORDINATION, BUT IT WILL HAVE NO FULL- TIME COORDINATING MECHANISM IN REGION TO GIVE GUIDANCE OR TO AGREE ON BASIC POLICY ISSUES. THUS, BOGAARS FEELS, THIS WILL NOT BE VERY EFFECTIVE ARRANGMENT
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AND ON IMPORTANT ISSUES EACH COUNTRY WILL GO ITS OWN WAY.

5. BOGAARS REMARKED THAT, THE PACE OF MOVEMENT TOWARD RECOGNITION OF PRC SEEMS TO HAVE SLOWED SOMEWHAT IN ASEAN. MALAYSIA REPORTED " NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS" SINCE LAST ASEAN MEETING AND WAS DISINCLINED

TO DISCUSS MATTER IN ANY DEPTH WITHIN ASEAN OR TO AGREE TO ANY COORDINATION AMONG MEMBERS. MALIK HAD REITERATED REASONS FOR HESITATING (BANGKOK' S 6179) AND SEEMED MORE NEGATIVE ON SUBJECT THAN PREVIOUSLY. SINGAPORE REITERATED ITS INTENTION OF BEING " LAST IN THE QUEUE".

6. COMMENT: GOS HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT ASEAN' S PREOCCUPATION WITH POLITICAL ISSUES AND HAS WANTED IT TO GET BACK TO WHAT GOS CONSIDERS ITS ORIGINAL MANDATE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. IT SEEMS TO HAVE SUFFERED A REBUFF IN ITS LATEST ATTEMPT TO REDIRECT ASEAN' S ATTENTION. THERE IS NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT SINGAPORE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ASEAN WITH THE HOPE THAT IN TIME IT WILL DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION TO NON- POLITICAL MATTERS.

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